WHIRRAKEE

January/February 2016 Vol. 37 No. 1

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Office Bearers for 2015 - 2016

President	*vacant*	
Vice President	Alistair White	0419 613 737
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer	0409 162 627
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	

Positions delegated by the Committee

Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley (for general meetings)	
Excursion sub-committee	**John Lindner**, Simon Hay, Richard Goonan	**5448 3406**
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	**Diana Collier**, Jess Milroy	**5443 0137**
Garden sub-committee	Kerrie Norris, Jess Milroy	
Observations coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Supper coordinators	Alistair White, Jess Milroy	
Hall management sub-committee	**Maurie Lewis**, Rob & Glenise Moors, Ben Goonan	**0407427179**
Whirrakee sub-committee	Sabine Wilkens, Alistair White, John McCallum, Ben Goonan	
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Website sub-committee	Ben Goonan, **John McCallum**	**54439347**

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Diana Collier, Devi Shanty, Simon Hay, John McCallum, Richard Goonan, Karen Thomas, Jess Milroy

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

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Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 37, No. 1, January/February 2016
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
A big warm welcome back, after what always seems like a very long and wonderful break. Whilst our summer this year has not delivered a record-breaking number of days over 40 degrees, the big dry on top of the hot January has given it an extreme edge. Many trees, especially street trees, are clearly very stressed, so let's hope they can last a while longer until it rains properly.
For 2016, the Whirrakee *sub-committee is very much hoping that we will have many more contributions to the magazine from the club's membership. Sending in a photo, or a recent observation of something in your garden or from a recent walk, does not take long, but will make this magazine more interesting to the general readership. It is easy to get 'filler material' of general interest, but locally relevant articles and observations is what the magazine is about, and achieving this is in your hands. Some members have been outstanding in this way, but it would be great if we had more diversity. I certainly never want to use so many of my own holiday photos again! Here is hoping!*
Lastly a big thank you to the excursion sub-committee for producing a busy and varied program again, some of which has already been confirmed. Put the dates of these in your diaries now.

Front page photograph: Joy Clusker photographed this Mountain Katydid, *Acripeza reticulata* just before New Years Eve near Fryerstown. A very impressive insect. Its beautifully blue-banded legs can be seen in the colour version on page 7.

Short Notices

Errata

Please accept my apologies for the following mistakes reported in the observations last month (thanks to Anne Bridley for picking these up)

Page 3: Keith Graham's Banded Plovers somehow ended up in Arnold St, instead of Arnold near Bridgewater. The latter is where they were (not in the middle of Bendigo!)
Page 8: Anne Bridely actually saw White-browed Woodswallows, but they appeared in print as White-browed honeyeaters (which don't exist).

2016 Excursion program

See page 9/10 for the full program. In future months, there may not be space to print more than the upcoming excursion, so make sure you keep the entire program somewhere safe, or better still, mark the known dates in your diaries now.
The first excursion is on March 11. See page 9 for details

Spider updates

Jenny Shield was sent the following link that shows a number of peacock spiders dancing, including *Maratus pavonis* (Spiders of Bendigo photos 144 & 145) and *Maratus* sp (Spiders photo 148). See: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-02/male-peacock-spiders-must-work-hard-to-win-the-ladies/6991106

Jenny showed another video of peacock spiders dancing at a general meeting some time ago. Since then, the same author has posted *Maratus vespertilio* dancing (Spiders photos 146 & 147), which shows not only courtship dance but also males confronting each other. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVDolRfgseY

Also, there is a new spider book out: *A guide to the Spiders of Australia* by VW Framenau, BC Baehr, P Aborowski, and it has inspired Jenny to update the updates of our own local spider book, now running to 3 pages. This latest update can be found on our website under the tab, 'publications'

Squabbles at Mandurang

A little story from the morning of December 7 from Karen Thomas

"This morning a cacophony of chough noise drew my attention to a confrontation between my family of 8 and another 14-15...over the nest of my troup. This was their 2nd unproductive nest for the season and I hadn't seen much activity there for the last 3 weeks until today. The neighbouring tribe were congregating over the nest, forming a large black huddle;.... with my lot first on surrounding branches then on the ground; ....all were screeching, tail nodding... lots of agitation... then after 5minutes or so the interlopers took off and my family flew immediately onto THEIR nest ...all attempting to repeat same kind of huddle as the interlopers, then flew off one by two after few minutes back to business of feeding as if nothing had happened ... am sure it was a serious event, but very entertaining to watch"

You're invited to Environment Victoria's Water Workshop, Bendigo, Thursday 11 February 2016

The Andrews government was elected just over a year ago on a promise to put the care and protection of the environment back on the agenda. But so far there has been little new direction for our rivers and wetlands. A fresh approach is urgently needed, because Victoria's rivers and wetlands are in trouble and increasing drought and climate change makes the task of protecting them even more urgent.
To help the discussion along Environment Victoria has set out a pathway to healthy rivers and sustainable water use in our new report **'Six steps to water leadership'** available here:
Continued on page 8...

Braving the summer heat

Left: Jewel Beetle on Clustered Everlasting, photographed by Joy Clusker just before New Years Eve at Fryerstown

Below is the Mountain Katydid, Acripeza reticulata from the front page (also by J.C.)

Below: The beautiful bronze spring foliage of *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, Southern Beech photographed by S.Wilkens in early December in the Otways.

Above: The website 'Brisbane insects and spiders', has many photos of this species; they seem to vary a fair bit with sex, age and location. One of their striking aspects cannot be seen here – bright bands of the abdomen, which are only exposed when the katydid is disturbed.

See:
http://www.brisbaneinsects.com/brisbane_grasshoppers/MountainKatydid.htm

So many unknowns…

Unknown beetle, which found its way into the University in early January. It was ≈ 6 cm long (Photo by S.Wilkens)

This interesting 'thing' (below), I assume it is a fungus, was growing on my compost in December. I have never seen anything like it before. Does anybody know what it is? It does look like a flower at first glance, but then again, it has what seem to be gills…(S.Wilkens)

Underside of the 'thing'

Unknown lizard (Grampians in late November)

Unknown (robber-fly?) (Grampians in late November) The insect was ≈ 5 cm long (Photo by B. Johnson)

Above: Black-anther flax lily

Left: *Dodonaea viscosa* in fruit

Leptospermum sp.

The Grampians in late November (photos by S. and K. Wilkens)

Below: Common fringe lily *Thysanotus tuberosus* (?)

Above:
Chrysocephalum baxteri
White everlasting, the left one is more mature than the right

Left: Pale Vanilla Lily
Arthropodium milleflorum

Brunonia australis did you know that some resources put this species into the family Goodeniaceae?

More Grampians flora of late November

Below: Possibly Wattle-mat rush *Lomandra filiformis*

A great display of Sweet Bursaria,
Bursaria spinosa

Continued from page 3…

http://www.eventbrite.com/e/bendigo-water-workshop-tickets-20800841878?aff=Bendigo2 It's particularly timely as the Andrew government is starting to develop a state water plan.

We're pretty excited about it but we would like to check the steps are meaningful for your community and seek your endorsement. You're invited to a workshop to discuss our Six Steps and consider the following questions:

- What do you think of our Six Steps to water leadership?
- Will they be helpful to address the issues facing your local creeks and wetlands?
- Is there another 'seventh' step required?

Workshop details
When: Thursday 11 February, 2.00-4.30 (afternoon tea provided)
Where: Golden City Support Services, 48 Mundy St, Bendigo
Ring Juliet Le Feuvre on 9341 8106 or RSVP at j.lefeuvre@environmentvictoria.org.au

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Cuckoos versus hosts: Australian fairy-wrens have the last laugh

The sight of a tiny host bird busily feeding an enormous cuckoo chick has puzzled naturalists for generations. Cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of other birds and soon after hatching, the cuckoo chick kills host young by throwing them out of the nest. Thus cuckoos impose a heavy cost on their hosts. Many host species have retaliated by evolving extremely fine egg discrimination abilities and rejecting any odd-looking eggs from their nests. This has led to an 'arms race' between cuckoos and hosts. Hosts evolve ever better means of detecting cuckoo eggs, and cuckoos evolve better and better means of fooling the host. However, if a cuckoo egg hatches, hosts fail to recognize the imposter even though it looks utterly unlike their own young and can be six times bigger than the adult hosts. Why has the arms race stopped short of hosts evolving recognition of cuckoo chicks? Recently, a study by Dr Naomi Langmore of the Australian National University, in collaboration with Dr Rebecca Kilner (Cambridge University) and Dr Sarah Hunt (Bristol University), revealed that the evolutionary arms race between cuckoos and hosts has escalated to a new stage in Australia. The Horsfield's bronze-cuckoo *Chalcites basalis* lays such a mimetic egg that it is never spotted and removed by hosts. However, roughly 40 % of host fairy-wren mothers have the last laugh. They abandon the nest, leaving the cuckoo chick to starve to death, while they re-nest. Cuckoo chicks are recognized partly because they are alone in the nest, and partly through their odd sounding begging calls.

From *ScienceWise* magazine. Australian National University seen at:
http://sciencewise.anu.edu.au/articles/sob-fairywren
There are lots of links to more details and similar stories there. Check it out.
(this link was posted by Geoff Park on the Natural Newstead blog, December 30, 2015)

Waterbirds in eastern Australia at lowest breeding level on record
By Deborah Rice, ABC

A stocktake of waterbirds in eastern Australia has shown the lowest breeding level on record. The annual aerial survey, conducted by the Centre for Ecosystem Science at the University of NSW, confirmed a dramatic long-term decline in the number of waterbirds. Director Richard Kingsford said that over 33 years of counting, average numbers had fallen more than 60 per cent. The trend continued in 2015 with a further drop compared to the previous three-to-five-year period.
"This is the second lowest number of waterbirds we've seen in that 33-year period and it's symptomatic of the real impacts of this drought that's occurring across the eastern half of the continent," Professor Kingsford said. continued on page 10…

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club **Excursion Program 2016**

Excursion Subcommittee • John Lindner (5448 3406) • Richard Goonan
• Simon Hay (0410) 424686) • Tim McCaw

Please Note

• Some of the excursion below do not depend on seasonal conditions and their dates can be fixed with confidence.
• However many others (fungi, wetlands, wildflowers) depend on the season, and at the moment the dates are open.
• Ideally the excursions will be on the Sunday after the monthly meeting, but this may not always be possible.
• There may be 2 excursions per month in some months.
• A full description by the trip leader(s) will appear in *Whirrakee* before each excursion.

Proposed Excursions With Firm Dates

Bird survey - Coliban Water treatment works, Epsom

Theme	Waterbird survey and count
Leader	Jane Cleary and/or Anne Bridley
Duration	Half a day
Dates	Friday 11 March
Location	Coliban Water sewage treatment works, Epsom
Details	Meet 9.00 am in Wallenjoe Road at the bend where the entrance gate to the big pond is located, 1.5 km down Wallenjoe from Howard Street, Epsom
Activity	3.5 km walk, observing and counting waterbirds,
Bring	morning tea, telescope, binoculars

Geology - Lake Eppalock glaciation

Theme	The Permian era glaciation at Derrinal and Moorabbee
Leader	Eric Wilkinson and John Lindner
Duration	One day
Location	Knowsley, Moorabbee, Derrinal
Date	Sunday 17 April
Details	• Ordovician bedrock pavements (eg. Kellam's Rock) • Glacial erratic's of various origins • Tillite (consolidated) deposits • Till (unconsolidated) deposits • Permian glacial pavements • The Stranger (large granite erratic)
Activity	Would most likely take the form of 2 walks, one along the lakeshore and one to The Stranger

Arboreal mammals

Theme	Mammals using nest boxes
Leaders	Kerrie Norris, Devi Shanty, Karen Thomas
Location	Diamond Hill and Spring Gully
Date	Sunday 24 April or Sunday 1 May (exact day to be decided)
Duration	Half day
Details	Investigation of mammal boxes using the pole camera bought by the club

Bird survey - Coliban Water treatment works, Epsom

Date	Friday 12 August
Details	the same as above

Proposed Excursions With Uncertain Dates

Fungi

Leader	Joy Clusker
Location	Bullarto or Mount Macedon. Depends on autumn and winter rains.
Date	Sunday 15 May or Sunday 12 June
Duration	One day

Wetlands

Theme	Wetland habitats and key vegetation types
Leader	Ben Goonan
Location	Tang Tang Swamp
Date	July, August, September or October, depending on winter rains
Duration	One day

Spring wildflowers

Leader	Richard Goonan
Date	September or October
Duration	One day
Location	To be decided as the season dictates

Birds in Knowsley S F

Leader	Anne Bridley
Date	Some time in October (or other suitable time)
Duration	One day
Location	Sites in the forest as investigated in November 2015

Other Linked Events

1. Campout

Location	Mount Samaria State Park
Leader	To be nominated
Date	Weekend 7-8 May

2. Southeast Australian Naturalists Association (SEANA) camps

Autumn Date	Friday 8 and weekend 9-10 April
Host	Geelong FNC
Location	To be specified
Spring	Details to be notified

3. **Naturalist workshops**

These are being held monthly throughout 2016.
It might be possible/desirable to link a workshop theme with an excursion theme, which follows it.

...continued from page 8

The survey covered all the major rivers, lakes and wetlands from Queensland down through New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, including the Murray-Darling Basin and the Riverina. See below for more details:
http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-27/a-stocktake-of-waterbirds-in-eastern-australia-has-shown-the-lo/7055178?WT.mc_id=newsmail
(this story was first seen at Dbytes no 225, 6 Jan 2016).

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, February 10 7.30pm
First meeting for 2016. The speaker is Dr Maria Gibson, Senior Lecturer, Deakin University with 'Battle of the bryophytes'.

Excursions
Bird survey - Coliban Water treatment works, Epsom - Friday 11 March
Theme Waterbird survey and count
See page 9 for details

Workshops
Details for the February workshop had not been finalized at the time of printing, but the planned date was 24/2/2016. Keep an eye on the website or announcement at the meeting.

Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities will continue in 2015, so look out for announcements or check out their website.
Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall.
The next meeting is on the 16th February.

2016 Autumn SEANA camp (Geelong FNC)
The date is 8-10 April.
Details and location to be announced.

Victoria's Water Workshop, Bendigo, Thursday 11 February 2016
Details are on page 3 and 8.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of the month at 1pm the Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall

Australian Naturalists Network
The ANN Get-Together for 2016 (ANN16) will be held in Western Australia and hosted by the WA Naturalists' Club.
Please contact the ANN 2016 Committee and the secretary Margaret Larke by email at ANN16@wanaturalists.org.au; mlarke@iinet.net.au for more information.

Mount Rothwell Tour, Fri 4 March 2016
7.40pm LittleRiver

Mt Rothwell is the largest predator-free ecosystem in Victoria and home to many of Victoria's endangered species such as quoll, bandicoot and potoroo. The spectacular setting helps visitors appreciate what the landscape looked like pre-European settlement. Participants will learn about the Centre's role, and go on a guided night walk to catch a glimpse of these animals when they are most active.

MountRothwellConservationCentre
5MtRothwellRd Little River Melway11 C10.

Walking in some areas may be on unstable ground, please ensure you wear appropriate footwear and bring clothing suited to the weather. Please bring a torch.
The Tour is part of WyndhamCC's Green Living Series events.
Bookings essential at:
http://www.experiencewyndham.com.au/whatson/mount_rothwell_tour

Information: Enviro&Sustainability
WyndhamCC 03 9742 0777